

August/September 2017

A publication of the U.S. Mission in Nigeria

CROSSROADS



Out of Many, One

EVENTS

2017 INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS June 28 & 29, 2017



Shuga Band brings the MOTOWN sound to Lagos



Ambassador W. Stuart Symington, Ambassador Vivian Okeke of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and DCM David J. Young stand at attention for the Star Spangled Banner in Abuja



Consul General John Bray welcomes the Alaafin of Oyo, His Imperial Majesty Oba Lamidi Olayiwola Adeyemi III, to the Lagos celebration



Management Officer Will Steuer with artist and philanthropist Nike Okundaye-Davies and her European interns in Lagos



The U.S. Marine Security Guard Attachment of the U.S. Embassy, Abuja present the colors



2017 Arts Envoy Andy Allo and her band light up the Abuja stage



W. Stuart Symington
U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria

Dear CROSSROADS Readers,
Looking back over our own history, we are constantly reminded that

there is nothing more important in a diverse country than appreciating our differences and embracing all those in our nation with heartfelt affection and a shared commitment to our common future, regardless of race, creed, heritage, or religion. Rich cultural diversity is something America shares with Nigeria and in this issue, we emphasize the necessity of working together for the good of all and of remaining united in the face of violence or calls intended to pull us apart.

Also in this issue, we reminisce on World Press Freedom Day and the events we held in Lagos and Abuja. The events provided fora for healthy discussions of the important relationship between Nigerians and their media representatives. You will also note that the U.S. Embassy has partnered with leading local media organizations to enhance their capacity to serve the needs of Nigerians and contribute to fostering

good governance and accountability.

A people's culture and heritage should never be allowed to fade away. All of us at our U.S. Mission in Nigeria are proud that investments from our Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation are being used to help keep the symbols of Nigeria's rich history and culture alive. For example, the National Museum in Jos, Plateau State, is currently undergoing a facelift on several fronts thanks to our efforts. I can't wait to see the outcome. More importantly, I cannot wait till many of you have the chance to see the great cultural works in that special place. As you read about what is there, I hope you will be as impressed as I am.

As always, please let us know what you think of this issue on any of our various online platforms. I appreciate your feedback.

W. Stuart Symington

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Out of Many,

by Sani Mohammed

About sixteen years ago, former U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said at an Iftaar event in Washington, "America is a nation of nations, made up of people from every land, of every race and practicing every faith. Our diversity is not a source of weakness; it is a source of strength, it is a source of our success."

The people of the United States represent an array of ethnic, cultural and religious backgrounds, all of whom help to make up the complex picture of what it means to be an American. The United States is often characterized as a nation of immigrants. Its rich heritage - often referred to as a "melting pot" - is in part due to successive waves of immigrants from around the world. The United States has welcomed more immigrants than any other country -- more than 50 million in all -- and today welcomes almost 700,000 persons a year. Americans have of necessity placed great value on diversity. America's ethnic groups celebrate their heritage, and the children of immigrants often grow up retaining the languages, traditions and cultures of their parents and grandparents.

This form of cultural enrichment thrives in America. However, doubts have been expressed since the founding of the United States concerning whether a nation composed of such varied people can succeed. Americans believe that their experience answers this question with a resounding yes.

The triumph of the American experience owes its success to many factors. Among them is, of course, the vision of the nation's founding fathers who established a government of, by and for the people. They also provided a constitution that guaranteed certain freedoms including freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of religion.

America's founders established a society that would embrace diversity and celebrate the differences that various cultures would bring to the United States. Most importantly, Americans share core values, represented within the Constitution, that the American mosaic, no matter their religion or ethnicity, all share. This is the glue that has led to the success of the American experiment.

These values which have contributed so much to the fabric and strength within America, also inform America's efforts to find common ground with peoples and cultures in other lands.

The 241st U.S. Independence anniversary celebration in Abuja was an occasion to underscore how much Americans share with Nigerians.

Ambassador W. Stuart Symington reminded the assembled guests that, like the United States, Nigeria is a wonderful nation whose differences and diversity are sources of strength and a reason for pride. He recalled that, "Whenever I meet a Nigerian, I ask, 'What do you like the most about your country?'" The

invariable reply, from more than a thousand Nigerians, is "I like the Nigerian people." I like our diversity, our resilience, our energy, our warmth, our spirit, our food..."

He reminded the guests that, "throughout the history of the United States, the diversity we prize, and share with Nigerians, has been a source of tension and, at times, even a challenge to our union. George Washington warned that those who sought to weaken and defeat us would first attack our unity of government, and Abraham Lincoln made preserving the union his life's work."

The Ambassador cited some of the difficulties the United States has faced in order to preserve its union and credited its success to the resilience of leaders and citizens committed to ensuring justice for all.

Most of all, Ambassador Symington believes that Nigeria is capable of facing and overcoming the same challenges. "Today, Nigeria is fortunate to have such leaders and citizens. Together they are dedicated to keeping Nigeria united and just and to ensuring every Nigerian is heard and taken into account and treated fairly. This is crucial; every one of you is crucial. Together those Nigerians will overpower any call to divide this Nation."

Thank you Mr. Ambassador. Reflecting the diversity of Nigerians, let me say both Amen and Inshallah

One

Visiting Arts Envoy Andy Allo joined Nigerian artists Jessica Bongos and The Isomers on stage at the Abuja Sheraton's Ladi Kwali Conference Center for a night of incredible music on June 30.

The Out of Many, One concert highlighted the diversity that is a hallmark of both Nigeria and the United States. A capacity crowd of more than 500 guests enjoyed the unique sound of Andy Allo and her band. The artists Andy Allo, Suzanne Mikula, Jacob Moses, Justin Smolian and Mathias Kuenzli hail from different parts of the United States from Massachusetts to California. Mathias was actually born in Switzerland, and Andy and Suzanne were also born abroad in Cameroon. The group truly represented the theme of the concert as they made the audience sing, laugh, and dance.

In addition, jazz songstress Jessica Bongos added her soulful tunes while The Isomers shook the crowd with their brand of afro-alternative rock. Out of Many, One, a collaboration between the U.S. Embassy and Play Network Nigeria, produced a night to be remembered.



Building Institutions and Support for Press Freedom

by Susan Dauda & Temitayo Famutimi



Consul General F. John Bray gives the keynote address during the event at the Lagos Consulate



L-R: Sec Gen of NUJ Shuaibu Leman, DG FRCN Mansur Liman, Editor-in-chief Daily Trust Manir Dan Ali during the first Abuja event

The 3rd Day of May, designated by the United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as World Press Freedom Day, helps highlight the importance of the fundamental principles of press freedom. In its annual tradition, the Public Affairs Section of the United States Mission, represented in Abuja and Lagos, organized a series of programs in commemoration of World Press Freedom Day.

Activities began with the screening of the iconic American film *All the President's Men* at Kaduna State University on May 1. This was followed on the 3rd of May by a panel discussion on journalistic ethics at the Embassy. The discourse was led by four experienced journalists including the Director General of the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria Mansur Liman, Editor in chief of the Daily Trust Manir Dan Ali, the Head of the BBC Hausa Service Naziru Mikailu, as well as Shuaibu Leman, the Secretary General of the Nigerian Union of Journalists.

They emphasized truth, accuracy and impartiality as basic principles that underpin the practice of journalism.

Also on the 3rd of May, a web chat on threats faced by the press was hosted by MSNBC's Richard Lui. During the web chat, Courtney Radsch of the Committee to Protect Journalists discussed the problem of "fake news" and the various dangers faced by journalists worldwide. Other events held in Abuja included a DVC with former journalist Eduardo Cue who spoke from Paris on "Media in a



David Ajikobi of Africa Check facilitates a seminar on fact-checking



Winners of the inter-collegiate debate competition - LASU journalism students - with Darcy Zotter, Public Affairs Officer Lagos

New Media Age” and a fact checking seminar conducted by David Ajikobi of Africa Check, the only organization in Africa devoted to fact checking. They were held on the 5th and 8th of May respectively.

The Public Affairs Section at the Consulate in Lagos, in collaboration with Lagos Television (LTV), a leading state-owned broadcast station, hosted reporters and editors from broadcast, print and online media; journalism students, and faculty; as well as senior media executives for a program on May 3rd.

During the program themed “Critical Minds for Critical Times: Media’s Role in Advancing Peaceful, Just, and Inclusive Societies” Consul General F. John Bray gave the keynote address underscoring the United States Government’s support for the freedom of the press. “We believe that an unfettered press is essential for democracy to thrive,” the Consul General said.

Public Affairs Officer Darcy Zotter delivered welcoming remarks, while distinguished speakers including Mrs. Funke Egbemode, President of the Nigeria Guild of Editors; Mr. Dapo Olorunyomi, Publisher of Premium Times; Mr. Simon Kolawole, Publisher of TheCable; Mr. Tomi Oluyomi-Lords, Media Law and Ethics Lecturer at the Nigeria Institute of Journalism (NIJ) and Mr. David Ajikobi, Nigeria Editor at Africa Check explored the role of fact checking; media ethics and law; twenty-first century gatekeeping; and the skills needed for digital journalism.

An inter-collegiate debate competition followed the speakers. Public Affairs Officer Darcy Zotter chaired the panel of three judges. At the end of the competition, Lagos State University (LASU) students emerged as the winners with the University of Lagos (UNILAG) coming in second. Nigeria Institute of Journalism (NIJ) and Yaba College of Technology (YABATECH) also participated in the debate. All of the competitors were awarded certificates of participation.



Journalism 101 Workshop

by Susan Dauda

Veteran U.S. journalist Bill Hinchberger shared his expertise with Nigerian journalists at a training hosted by Channels TV. Organized in collaboration with the U.S. Embassy Abuja, Hinchberger took the journalists through some of the fundamentals of journalism including story development, locating sources, accuracy and objectivity, interview techniques, ethics, and balanced coverage.

He first enumerated that the basic principles of journalism include honesty, fairness, curiosity, skepticism, persistence, accuracy, attention to detail, individual effort and teamwork. Hinchberger listed social media, data, news stories, and issues people are talking about in their communities as potential sources of story ideas.

Regarding the concept of objectivity in journalism, he said a journalist must recognize that every person has some form of bias. He encouraged journalists to admit their particular biases which might include race, age and gender and strive to negate the effect of those biases in order to be fair to all sides in their reporting.

Hinchberger reminded the journalists that another basic principle of journalism is that they should be a voice for the voiceless.

Ethics was also emphasized during the training. With so many utilizing social media for information, journalists must uphold higher standards than the norm to distinguish themselves from the competition and maintain the trust of the general public.

Hinchberger repeatedly emphasized precision, clarity and efficiency in writing and producing stories. The increased competition in today’s media environment certainly pushes journalists to try to get the story on the air or in print first but it is just as important to fact check and make sure that they get the story right.

Many of the participants asked questions concerning how to navigate between the competing interests of their medium and the rights of the public especially when covering sensitive political issues. Hinchberger advised them to be persistent and professional, recommending that they also cultivate a good relationship with their editors.

NUGGETS

LESSONS FOR NIGERIA

by Sani Mohammed

The Media Co-op program is a key U.S. cultural exchange that provides foreign media organizations the opportunity to experience the workings of American institutions and American society in general. These co-ops enable broadcasters to travel throughout the United States to interview policymakers, activists, professionals, and everyday citizens who will help them tell the American story, drawing lessons that may enhance good governance, social inclusion, or economic prosperity in their own countries. OAK TV, a Nigerian media outlet that focuses on the National Assembly, wanted to examine the U.S. federal budget process, including the role of the legislative branch, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), and

the respective cabinet departments in the “First 100 Days” of President Trump’s Administration. Led by Mandela Washington Fellow, Adeshola Komolafe, OAK TV’s two-member crew toured the United States, guided by Media Co-op producer Bradley Hague, from June 26 to July 9, 2017.

The crew has returned to Nigeria, with lots of stories to tell about the budgeting and lobbying processes in the United States Congress. Utilizing its multimedia platforms and partnerships with other media

institutions, OAK TV released its first report headlined “U.S. Transparency Bill to expose illicit funds from Nigeria, others.” The report was broadcast by OAK TV on YouTube and went viral, it was also published by the Premium Times, The Guardian newspaper and others.



OAK TV's Adeshola Komolafe and Abdulaziz Ahmad Aliyu, with their Media Co-op producer and guide, Bradley Hague

Every summer, the U.S. Mission to Nigeria hires young American high school or college students to serve as interns. *Crossroads* asked two of the 2017 interns what had they learned during their time in Nigeria, here’s what they had to say...

Julia Public Affairs Section

I was able to participate in a journalism workshop for a week and through that experience, I interacted with Nigerians who really want to help other Nigerians by providing information to the masses. I also learned more about the history of Nigeria through a lunch discussion with people from the North and the South. The best part about working in the Public Affairs Section, however, was learning about the impact the U.S. Embassy has with various programs that Nigerians were able to be a part of, such as the Mandela Washington Fellowship, Young African Leaders Initiative, and the Fulbright Program, to name a few.

Brandon USAID

I learned that Nigeria is the largest funder of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), a multinational regional economic organization promoting peace and economic cooperation. The organization has 15 members and was established in 1975 following the signing of the Treaty of Lagos. Its headquarters is located in Abuja. In the past, ECOWAS has encouraged regional economic self-sufficiency and supported peacekeeping missions in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

ECOWAS has also partnered with USAID to counter violent extremism, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and increase electricity output.



SPECIAL

In Our Woods

Timi Oduese

Twenty-year old Timi Oduese is the winner of the 2017 World Environment Day Short Story Eco Writing Contest hosted by U.S. Embassy Abuja.

The purpose of the contest, which was open to amateur, unpublished writers, was to promote environmental awareness and literacy

An intending law student, Timi believes the world will be a better place if people read more books.

I know before I pull the trigger.

This will be a hard kill.

Baba's gun is too old to be silent when aiming to shoot. Even when I sling it on my shoulders and walk, it rattles, making tiny crackling noises as the different wooden parts threaten to fall apart. But it is our gun; it is all we have. It is not often that we see deer around here, in our woods. All that is abundant are bush rats, squirrels and rabbits. And very little deer or antelope. One of Baba's friend, Musa, who has a face so angular I am sure that if I put the straight handle of one of Pegi's wooden spoon against his cheek, it will measure adequately says that he once saw a lion here, in our woods. But Baba simply nodded when Musa said it; later, he told me that Musa often added spice to his stories and that all he probably saw was a wild dog and I wondered if Musa knew that everyone else knew his stories were spiced just like how Pegi knows she has added too much curry to the rice when I don't bring my metal plate to her to ask for seconds.

The deer has still not noticed me. It stands there, grazing lightly, its brown eyes flicking around, waiting to jump at any sign of a predator. Waiting for a predator, a premonition, me. I have not taken a step yet. Not since I spotted it. I must be very careful. I hear Baba's voice in my head. "Slow. Slow. Do not shake", he says. So I start to bring up the nozzle of the gun. I start to aim.

My sister, Pegi says chicken is very expensive and beef, even more so; so our pots are mostly filled with stock fish; our soups, a thin watery broth. We do not eat most of the kills we make; we give some to the soldiers so that they don't take Baba's gun away, so that they don't break into our room at night to drag away a screaming Pegi, so that they don't call me to stand at attention in front of them while they strip of my clothes and deem that I am fit to hold the baton. But majority of the kills, we give to Mammy Kook, the fat woman who shares the rations at the center of the village; the one who never stands up because the rolls of fat between her neck and her waist have weighed her down; Baba says that Mammy Kook used to have a wooden chair but I guess

it must have broken and now anytime I walk to her with a bush rat in hand to be exchanged for egusi, tomatoes and garri, I think of how many men it must have taken to carry those heavy rolls up from above the broken shards of wood. Mammy Kook doesn't not bargain with you. You tell her what you want and she asks you what you can give for it. You give her half a rabbit and she gives you two big onions. It is all you will get. You will not get much else from her. And you will not get much else from anybody else. So we don't have a lot to eat; just enough for our bodies to survive onto the next day to stumble around again to find what to eat. But not nearly enough for our souls to survive.

Baba used to say that there was once food; too much food even and that it wasn't so hard to live. But that everyone fought over it. And that we ended up wasting it, destroying the abundance to prevent each other from getting it and therefore setting a boomerang trap for ourselves in the process. He said that the Men of Long Wars took our food away, that they killed the food, the earth, nature itself and most of the people died of hunger. We are all that is left. Little clumps of villages like Oko filled with people slowly waiting for a weakened and corrupt government to send them weekly rations and tiny portions of food to keep their bodies alive. He says that the government has always been this way, corrupt and stoic but that the people were different, more alive; that the world was hopeful and that most importantly, there was food; that the food was just waiting to be found.

*

"It will slowly kill them", Baba tells me one day as we are moving slowly through the green forest to check up on our snares. The one we are at now has caught a large rat. It is still alive, its bloodied gray body slightly wriggling around the teak-colored point of the wooden stake.

"What will?", I ask as Baba hands me the knife, the one with the fraying red piece of cloth tied around its hilt.

"Living like that in Oko", he replies and I can feel his eyes on the

back of my head as I bring my blackened knees to the floor with the knife in my hand to finish what the snare refused to do, the metal of the hilt slightly chafing my palm, the red cloth ignoring its duty of comforting my palm.

“It is hunger that will kill everybody in Oko, Baba. Not living inside it”, I answer with Baba’s voice in my head telling me sharply as I move in for the kill, “Straight through the heart. Don’t play around with it. Mercy”. I plunge the knife into the side of the rat and feel it squirm for a split second, shudder and go still. It is better now, I whisper to the dead meat, you will not need to stay here and suffer like the rest of us. I look up at Baba and he nods, his right hazel eye smiling with pride and the left one that has a silver-and-milky white color doing nothing as usual. I do not know why he is proud though, he has had bigger kills, does, wild dogs, hogs and I have only stuck my knife through the heart of a rat.

He opens his mouth to continue and brings his hands up to scratch his white stubble. “Minna, listen to me”, he says, his voice getting harsher “No one in Oko will die of hunger. Surely, they will all die with empty stomachs but no single one of them will die of an empty stomach. Our rations make sure of that”. It pains me that he is talking about the death of the people in Oko, our friends, our loosely knit family but in my head, it clicks and registers and I know it is true; just like all else that Baba has said.

“So Pegi, you and I also - “, I start to say but Baba cuts me off.

“No”, he stops me.

“Why?”

“You and Pegi do not live like the rest of them. And thus you will not die like them”

“How are we different Baba?” I ask. Everyone in Oko eats the same thing, my own family included, I do not see how we can

escape this idiosyncratic normal death that Baba has said will sweep through all of Oko.

“You come here with me. You come to these woods with me” he replies. His hands still scratching the stubble on his chin as if he is deep in thought and silently waiting for me to put my own hands on my bare chin and join him in blissful thought.

I think Baba has begun to forget and so I point it out to him. “Most people come here Baba. It is not exclusive to us only”

“Yes it is”. He says and I look up and see the smile in his eyes. Baba only does this when he wants to reveal something; perhaps a secret of hunting; or how to follow the wild goats to find the best blackberry groves; or even trailing a rabbit back to its hole and smoking the whole burrow out. I used to wonder how he does it. How Baba could speak sometimes with so much harshness in his tone and still smile with his eyes. Pegi was the one who told me, “It is a rare gift”.

“No one comes in this deep”, Baba says. “Not anymore.”

I know this. “And because you have brought Pegi and I this far into the woods is why we will not die like the rest?”, I ask.

Baba nods his head and tells me “Yes”. He says that Pegi and I are different; that we have life in our eyes. He says it is because of these old woods. He says that we have joined our roots to the roots of the trees; that we are connected. He says that it is why only Pegi knows where she can find rare spices like rosemary, tarragon and cumin; that it is why only she could enter the forests in the spring months and come back with a sackful of ruby red apples; that it is why I run almost as fast as deers and why I am not afraid to climb up the tall groves of bamboo trees. “You have connected to the woods”, Baba tells me. “You are more than everyone else in Oko. Do you not see”, he asks. “How easy it for you to be here? How much you prefer to lie down in the cool shade of the trees rather than under the dusty haze of the huts?”

Do you not feel the forest running through your veins when you drink from the small spring?" he pauses and looks at me. It is one of his drilling looks; the ones that chill me to the bones; the ones that will etch memories into my soul; the ones that make me truly understand what he is talking about. "You and Pegi will not die like the rest. Because to both of you, these woods, these clumps of green trees, brown earth, blue-gray sky and clear water is more than another source for meals. It is your escape. It is your life, your bravado to the despair of Oko. And because you are truly alive when you are in these woods, Oko will never be able to kill you. Your lives are as wild and as alive as these woods and Man will never again be able to snuff the life out of them again", he raps his right hand on the bark of a thick tree, mahogany. "And if everyone in Oko truly knew this, if they could be one with these woods as you and Pegi are, then Oko will not kill them that easily". It brings tears to my eyes, what Baba said, but I do not let him see even though I guess he knows. I turn around and bring my dirty shirt to clean my eyes and turn around to face Baba who says we should move on to check our other snares, pretending that he has not taught me something useful; like I had not cried over simple words.

The conversation is deeply sated into my brain. How can it not be? It is Baba's meaningful last conversation with me before he goes away. That is what my elder sister called it, going away and not dying. We wrapped him up in thick raffia mats and buried him at the back of the house and then we went to the soldiers and registered it there in their book that Baba was no more. "3313, sir", Pegi tells the man at the desk and he nods and scratches out something on the big book that lies open in front of him. This is how things are done in Oko. You are born, you are given a number. You die, your number is scratched out. One comfort came out of Baba's death in the form of a small brown paper bag of goat meat that was hidden inside our weekly rations; Mammy Kook had known Baba well. No one gives anything else. No one has anything to spare.

*

There are no strong men in Oko. Only small bodied ones. Men whose brown skin have been blackened by working in the sun, planting and harvesting maize, beans and yams. Men whose arms would be heavily muscled if they had full bellies. Some of these men come to meet me when I drag in the deer. It is too heavy for me to carry on my shoulders, I am not strong enough and I am tired, I have dragged it quite far. They are men whose faces I know too well. Musa with the angular face, Tama whose teeth are crooked from chewing the hard sections of sugar cane, Zuba whose eyes are so crossed that his left seemed to be looking up while his right stared below; Baba's friends. The soldiers come to us when they see what we are dragging in. They are shouting questions and smiling so wide I am afraid their faces will tear. I do not know why they are all so happy; it is a single deer and if we were all to eat it, we would each get a single bite only. They follow us to our hut where an elated Pegi dashes in to get the knife with the red hilt, it is the same vibe that spread around when Pegi came back with the apples.

I prepare to go back into the woods the next day. I go to say goodbye to Pegi; she sits outside using the knife of the brown skin of the deer. This is all that is left of yesterday. A pelt that needs to be cured and a few tiny pieces of venison. We have given the soldiers their share, more than their share even because their wide smiles are just excuses to bare their waiting teeth. And Mammy Kook gave us a tiny basketful pepper and some oranges in exchange for most of the meat and all of the bones and when the pelt is ready, we will get more for it. The little meat that was left shared for the hungry men in Oko. We could keep only a little for ourselves. Pegi says we will eat meat today but that I should not expect a feast. She says it with her eyes and I nod. "I know. It will just be a nice change to eat something other than stock fish. Till I come", I say and I walk out of the house, through the dusty despair of Oko and into the woods.

NUGGETS

AFRICA'S NEWEST PRIORITY AMERICAN SPACE OPENS IN LAGOS

by Sam Eytayo



Consul General F. John Bray (L) and Ambassador Symington (R) at the opening of the American Corner at CcHUB, Yaba, Lagos

On May 26, 2017, Ambassador W. Stuart Symington launched Nigeria's first state-of-the art Priority American Space. At the event, attended by technology leaders and the media, Ambassador Symington explained that the space is a center for Nigerians to develop innovative ideas, as well as learn about the United States and its people.

The Space is hosted in Yaba, Lagos by the Co-Creation Hub (CcHUB), a business incubator that networks and sometimes funds "social entrepreneur" startups whose businesses solve compelling social problems. CcHUB CEO Bosun Tijani declared that "we need to use the creativity of every single person in our society to lift society forward." The beauty [of this space] is the ability to come in and collaborate." Corner Director Toluwani Johnson took the Ambassador and Consul General F. John Bray on a tour of the Space, followed by a tour of CcHUB's incubation operations in the same building.

The Space, now open to members of the public, is composed of a Makerspace - a tech area designed to promote digital skill-building; a workshop space equipped with the latest laptops and tablets for internet learning; a conversation space for small group meetings and research; and a meeting space that supports innovation and creative collaboration. With a rich array of programs and trainings, this new Priority American Space which is the tenth of its sort in Africa and 67th worldwide, will promote ingenious ideas, critical thinking and reasoned discourse.

THE YALI PROGRAM

by Diran Adegoke

The U.S. Mission Nigeria selected 100 young Nigerians to participate in this year's **Mandela Washington Fellowship** from June 15 to August 2, 2017. The fellows were selected from 22,000 applicants after a rigorous review process including a reading of 1,600 applications by Mission staff and interviews of 400 finalists in seven cities. The pre-departure orientation featured the participation of leading business professionals and NGO leaders who aligned with the fellowship's four tracks: business, civil leadership, public management, and energy. Mrs. Toyin Saraki, founder of The Wellbeing Foundation Africa and wife of Senate President Bukola Saraki, spoke passionately about grassroots organizing and her foundation's priority, maternal health.



Tonye Cole with some of the 2017 Mandela Washington fellows during a reception held in their honor before their departure

Members of the **YALI Network** Abuja gathered for the 8th edition of their "Face2Face" mentoring series to discuss youth participation in politics with American University Professor of Government and former Chevy Chase, Maryland, Mayor David Lublin. Speaking via digital video conference, Lublin highlighted the importance of young people educating themselves on the issues, speaking out on priorities that matter to them, and running for office to ensure action through representative government. Lublin admitted, "It's a simple concept. By virtue of your age, you're going to be around longer than older people. These issues will matter to you more." Lublin gave pragmatic advice on starting a political career, referencing his own activity in local government. The group discussed differences and similarities between the American and Nigerian systems and emphasized the need for transparency and accountability in government.

BUILDING FRIENDSHIPS IN CULTURAL PRESERVATION

The Ambassador's Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) Experience *By Nengak Daniel Gondyi*



ICCROM's Dr. Terry Little (right) leading a reorganization team in the National Museum Jos

Nigeria's cultural diversity is celebrated at home and abroad; but not many appreciate the hard work that goes into preserving such a heritage. The Embassy of the United States of America in Nigeria has worked with stakeholders over the years on a variety of cultural preservation projects through its Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP). Some prominent AFCP projects include the preservation of the 18th century Gobarau minaret in Katsina, one of the oldest multi-story buildings in Nigeria; and the restoration of 12th century Kofar Kansakali, the oldest of the 15 city gates to the walled old city of Kano.

In 2016, the U.S. Mission in Nigeria, through the AFCP program, provided funding for the "Re-Org Nigeria: Saving Museum Collections" project; a partnership between the National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM), the Ahmadu

Bello University Zaria and ICCROM, an international cultural preservation organization based in Rome. The goal of the Re-Org Nigeria project is to support preservation efforts in Nigeria by training officials from 12 national and university museums on preserving museum collections using a method of reorganization and classification. The National Museum in Jos was chosen as a host for the training.

Hands-on Training for Curators

In May 2017, the Re-Org Nigeria project partners hosted a 15-day training workshop for 40 curators from 12 museums at the National Museum, Jos. Before this training, the storage section of the Jos Museum was simply an eyesore: decaying wooden artefacts were stuffed in overcrowded shelves and littered on the floors with no obvious classification system. Mold grew on leather and wooden artefacts while terracotta pieces deteriorated under

a leaking roof. Artefacts brought in by vendors for sale to the museum were clustered while awaiting expert assessment and purchase decision.

The trainees and facilitators reorganized the museum during the workshop; storage rooms were cleaned, shelves reinforced and additional shelves built. Over 20,000 artefacts held by the museum were cleaned, sorted and re-shelved. Although funding was needed for this reorganization, the zeal and dedication of the eager curators is perhaps the most important resource for this transformation.

Between June and December 2017, the 40 trainees will use the Re-Org methodology to reorganize 12 museum collections. Come December 2017, the Re-Org Nigeria project team will convene a debriefing workshop where curators will showcase their reorganization efforts in their home museums.

Closing the Workshop; Opening the Exhibition

On June 2nd, 2017, the Re-Org Nigeria partners hosted a ceremony to mark the end of their workshop and to open an exhibition at the National Museum Jos. The ceremony helped to create awareness about the transformation in the Jos Museum and to mobilize the community to the new exhibition, the first since 2014. Mr. Aruna Amirthanayagam, the Counselor for Public Affairs and his wife, accompanied by members of the Embassy staff joined other guests in a packed auditorium to award certificates to the trainees. Other guests included representatives of the Plateau State government, implementing partners of the Re-Org Nigeria project, traditional rulers, cultural dance troupes and hundreds of community members who enjoyed a memorable display of cultural dances.

The Jos Museum is Nigeria's oldest national museum and home to one of the most important collections; yet very few of its 22,000 artefacts have ever been exhibited. The Re-Org Nigeria team decided to host a temporary exhibition called "Hidden Treasures of Jos Museum" featuring 19 well-chosen objects which had never been exhibited. The exhibition was officially opened by Mr. Amirthanayagam and will remain open to the public until December 2017 – be sure to visit if you are in Jos and environs. By the end of June 2017, some 1,982 students from 41 schools in Plateau and Bauchi states had been guided through the Hidden Treasures. Thanks to AFCP and Re-Org Nigeria, with the museum collection now reorganized, curating exhibitions will become easier and more frequent.

Cultural Heritage Matters

Museums, and the growing collections they host, are important testaments to the traditions of friendships, innovation and resilience among the Nigerian people. The



Artefacts in storage at the National Museum Jos

rich collection in Jos includes relics ranging from the symbolic terra-cotta sculptures of the Nok people to the cowry shells used as currency and the fiery looking masquerades from across Nigeria. Through this collection, a mini-Nigeria is preserved for the present and future generations, while incrementally adding the monuments of each passing generation.

The U.S. Mission in Nigeria is a friend of Nigerian culture and it will continue to explore opportunities to support Nigeria's preservation efforts. Hopefully, the friendships and partnership forged between people and institutions by the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation and through the "Re-Org Nigeria: Saving Museum Collections" project will outlive the grant and inspire the next generation of friends and curators of Nigeria's cultural heritage.



Counselor for Public Affairs - Aruna Amirthanayagam; Professor Umar Buratai - Dean of Arts, ABU Zaria; and Dr. Yusuf Abdallah Usman - Director General, National Commission for Museums and Monuments (NCMM) after the official opening of the exhibition - "Hidden Treasures of the Jos Museum"

USAID

ADDRESSING THE FARMER/HERDER CONFLICT IN NIGERIA

By Zach Taylor

Approximately 25 million Fulani live in nearly 20 countries in Africa, with more than half living in Nigeria. While many have abandoned their nomadic lifestyle, about one third maintain their traditional ways, making them the largest nomadic community in the world today.

Herdsman and farmers historically played symbiotic roles. Herds grazed on crop remnants, while the cows added manure to fallow fields. Traditional leaders were often able to resolve

conflicts before violence escalated. But over the last few decades, population growth and climate change have radically diminished grazing pastures and sources of water, often resulting in conflict between the two groups.

USAID observed a worsening situation and began supporting a

series of local peace dialogues to better understand the drivers of the conflicts, and introduce activities to reduce misconceptions and increase understanding. USAID-funded partner Mercy Corps conducted a baseline survey in 2015, which revealed that centrally-mandated solutions were largely ineffective and that community-based initiatives would probably prove more effective.

The proliferation of arms, displacement, and the rise of cattle rustling also contributed to increased violence. The result has been more than 4,000 deaths last year alone and approximately \$13.7 billion in lost revenue from 2013-15, according to USAID partner Mercy Corps.

The conflict begins when cattle, often tended by young boys, trample crops. In retribution, the herds, which are essentially currency in



Of the 25 million Fulani in West Africa, about a third continue to live a traditional semi-nomadic lifestyle of herding cattle. They are the largest nomadic population in the world today. Photo: USAID/Mercy Corps

Fulani culture, are shot or poisoned. This leads to escalating violence on both sides. Facilitated discussions, known as peace dialogues, between the farmers and herders revealed that the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)-designated grazing routes have gradually been swallowed up by farms, roads, and buildings. As a result, cattle trod on farmland and damage crops.

These peace dialogues identified solutions, such as delineating cattle routes through agricultural areas and conducting social outreach to increase understanding. Trainings helped villagers on both sides understand that respect and dialogue can lead to conflict resolution. In addition, USAID-sponsored programming on community radio and television educated people on the larger issues driving the conflict.

As a result, some communities have agreed to reserve ten feet of space between farms for cattle routes. They also agreed to a more transparent system of arbitration and the levy of fines by village leaders when fields are damaged. In the event of the destruction of crops, farmers and herders would first try to reach an agreement. If none could be reached, cases would be referred to a committee composed of both farmers and herders, who would assess the damage and recommend appropriate compensation.

"Since we came to this agreement in February (2017), there have been no attacks or violence between farmers and herders," said Osaka Sansui, a farmer living in central Nasarawa State. "This is a critical first step in improving the relationship, an example of how peace can return to the area."

Following the baseline survey by Mercy Corps, a violent incidence tracking system was implemented in twenty communities. Recent information from this system shows that violence stemming from farmer-herder conflict fell by at least 25 percent since its introduction.

In April, USAID and partners -

Interfaith Mediation Center, Mercy Corps and Search for Common Ground - convened 150 stakeholders from 16 of Nigeria's 36 states to find ways to integrate these programs nationally. Participants included farmers and herders, as well as religious, regional, and ethnic leaders.

"The more we work together, the more we cooperate, the better for Nigeria," said Ardo Mahmud Adam, a leader of herders in Plateau State. "We need to have continuous dialogue so that when the inevitable conflict arises, we can resolve it without violence."

Given a platform to speak frankly and respectfully about their concerns,

frustrations, and perceptions, participants from all sides agreed the conflict undermines Nigeria's unity, prosperity, and national security.

Participants in the peace dialogue discussions called on the federal government to curb illegal weapons, modernize agricultural practices, and fully enforce the demarcation of farmland and grazing reserves. Another major recommendation was training for the media, which often inflames already tense situations. In August 2017, USAID and its partner, Search for Common Ground, brought together senior members of the media to discuss the current situation and formulate solutions to these challenges.



Above: Osaka Sansui, a farmer living in the Ardor Siding community in central Nasarawa State speaks at a USAID conducted Peace Dialogue. Photo: USAID/The Search for Common Ground.

Below: More than 150 stakeholders in distinctive headgear participated in a USAID-supported conference to establish consensus on finding solutions for the conflict in April. Photo: USAID/Zack Taylor





Student Visas

By James Swift

As a Consular Officer, I've adjudicated over 25,000 visas, but I'm always a little excited when I approve a student's application.

As Africa's biggest economy and most-populous country, Nigeria sends far and away more students to the United States than any nation on the continent. As of May 2017, there were 14,438 active Nigerian students out of 52,100 for all of Africa, according to the Department of Homeland Security. Numbers of Nigerian students have grown by 44 percent in the past three years, and Texas is the most-popular destination for them by far.

To aid prospective students during the summer rush, the Consular and Public Affairs sections of Embassy Abuja interacted with local media in July to get the word out on the application process. A major part of this effort is dispelling myths. Common questions heard in these outreach events were concerned how

the President's Executive Order on travel affected Nigeria and whether America was issuing any visas at all to Nigerians. In fact, the Executive Order doesn't single out Nigeria at all, while both demand and issuance of visas in all categories remain high.

Our core message to prospective applicants is that America's schools are open for business and continue to welcome students from around the world. There are 8,774 schools in the United States certified to accept international students. Once granted admission, students will need a visa. Most go for F visas, which cover most academic subjects, while others seek M visas for certain trades, such as flight training.

The criteria for getting the visa are straightforward. The applicant must demonstrate that he or she is a bona fide student. They must be able to pay their tuition and living expenses, either through family funds or scholarships. Finally, they must intend to return home at the conclusion of their studies.

For any student, higher education is a huge investment of time and money. American schools vary widely in quality and cost. Using my own example, my MBA from the University of Hawaii took a year and a half out of my working life and cost about \$40,000 that I paid off

over the next 15 years. Every student needs to self-evaluate whether their plan makes good educational and economic sense. An excellent resource for navigating these options is EducationUSA, a component of the Embassy's Public Affairs Section devoted to assisting students interested in studying in the United States.

Many applicants tell us that they are very nervous during their visa interviews and that they're worried their stammering will sink their chances. My advice is to just take a breath and speak from the heart. The interview is just a short conversation where the Consular Officer will ask how you picked your school and how you plan to pay for your education. If you are not approved, it's not the end of the world. You may reapply, and every application is given a fresh look by a different officer. If you do reapply, try to focus on presenting new evidence, otherwise the result will likely be the same.

After many thousands of interviews I've done, I still get some vicarious enjoyment when I issue each student visa. I imagine the adventure of travelling across an ocean and embarking on interesting studies. It marks a new chapter in that individual's life, and it adds another cultural tie that binds Nigeria and the United States.

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